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Step by Stemp: The Governance  
of Empire



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# Step by Step

The

## Governance of Empire



By  
REGINALD V. HARRIS, M. A.

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C. K. OGDEN

# Step by Step

## The Governance of Empire.

(The Essay, now revised, which won  
first prize, 100 guineas, in the  
"Standard of Empire"  
Competition.)

by

REGINALD V. HARRIS, M. A.

Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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## Introductory.

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The essay which follows is based on the essay which won the prize of one hundred guineas offered through the "Standard of Empire" by a patriotic and public-spirited correspondent for the best short essay (3,000 words) on "The Governance of Empire." That competition closed September 1st, 1909, the announcement being made March 11th, 1910.

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"Essays were sent in from British subjects living in practically every country in the world, a circumstance which affords eloquent testimony to the widespread and patriotic interest taken in the subject of the competition, and incidentally may be regarded as a gratifying indication of the wide area over which the Empire newspaper travels."

"To each member of the Adjudicatory Committee—namely,

The Right Hon. the Earl of Jersey, P. C., G. C. B.,  
G. C. M. G., etc,

The Right Hon. Lord Northcote, P. C., C. B.,  
G. C. I. E., G. C. M. G.,

The Right Hon. Sir Charles Tupper, P. C., G. C.  
M. G., D. C. L., etc.,

Mr. E. J. Duveen,

Mr. L. S. Amery,

Mr. H. A. Gwynne, Editor of "The Standard,"

Mr. A. J. Dawson, Editor of "The Standard of  
Empire"—

each essay was sent in turn accompanied by a slip on which the adjudicator indicated the number of merit marks, from 1 to 10, to which the particular essay was, in his opinion, entitled. None of these slips were seen by any other member of the Adjudicatory Committee, so that the judgment in each case was an absolutely independent one. When the judging was completed the slips were collated, and the writer of the essay which secured the greatest aggregate number of marks proved to be Mr. Harris.

"The first three competitors in order of merit were:—

|  | Marks. |
|--|--------|
| Mr. Reginald V. Harris, Halifax, N. S. . . . .   | 66     |
| Mr. David Shearme, care of Thomas Cook & Son,<br>Ludgate Circus, London, E. C. . . . . | 63     |
| Mr. Arthur L. Sainsbury, Westbourne Gardens,<br>Trowbridge, Wilts . . . . .            | 58     |

The next competitors in order of merit were as follows:—

Capt. Dudley S. A. Cosby, West Bournemouth,  
Hampshire.

M. I. Trachtenberg, B. A., Maida Vale, W.



F. J. Newnham, Royal Colonial Institute, North-  
umberland Avenue, W. C.

Rev. H. T. F. Duckworth, Trinity College,  
Toronto.

J. Blair Williams, 58, Evelyn-gardens, S. W.  
J. Castell Hopkins, Toronto, Canada.

J. E. G. de Montmorency, M. A., LL. B., 11  
New-square, Lincoln's Inn.

Henry Tipper, Cricklewood, N. W.

J. Stanley Little, Royal Colonial Institute, North-  
umberland Avenue, W. C.

E. Horsford Bingley, Dorking, Surrey.

H. F. Wyatt, United University Club, Pall  
Mall, S. W.

Major P. A. Silburn, D. S. O., Durban, Natal.  
Sir Lewis Tupper, C. S. I., K. C. I. E., East  
Molesey, Surrey.

W. D. Lighthall, K. C., F. R. S. C., Montreal.

H. J. Jennings, Savage Club, Adelphi.

F. R. Syms, Surbiton Hill.

F. R. Wortz, Leeds.

A. Pinto Joseph, Quebec, Canada.

Captain A. G. Shortt, Bramerton, Norwich.

Lieut.-Colonel A. B. Morgan, Chesterton, Cam-  
bridge.

A. W. Barnes, St. Peter's Road, East London.

Mrs. H. Galpin, Harlow, Essex.

"The winning essay has been selected from an  
enormous number of able contributions submitted  
from every State of the Empire. Many of these

were of very high quality; nearly all showed that the writers had pondered long and carefully over the momentous problems they discussed.

"The majority of these essays, some of which were sent by men of the highest possible standing and repute, showed a notable grasp of the subject under discussion and a very wide knowledge of the British Empire and British constitutional history."

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The essay has been revised and is now published at the request of friends of the writer.

R. V. H.

Halifax, Nova Scotia.

March 21st, 1911.

## The Governance of Empire.

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Imperial unity is not only essential to the well-being of the Empire, but absolutely necessary to its maintainance. If the Empire is to be perpetuated it must be united by a bond of mutual interest and common sympathy. There must exist an inward and spiritual unity, which must precede the outward and constitutional organization. Closer union must be the consummation and result of experience and evolution, the product of an educational process, backed up by imperial sentiment and conviction. The nation-states must be made to feel in a real way their imperial interest and oneness, and their part in the shaping of imperial destinies. They must realize that the continuance of the Empire is bound up with the Empire's problems and that these problems are for them and all of them, to solve and that they must come together and solve them. They must aim at establishing the visible evidence of their common interests and equal rights. And the duty is upon all of the States of the Empire to set up the ideal and work towards it: to preach the gospel of All-British co-operation as the gospel of All-British salvation.

Of late years, centripetal sentiment has been rapidly overcoming centrifugal tendencies. There is a silent movement towards a greater unity,

a sentiment underlying the national life, making for a better understanding, imperially. The overseas states have manifested a desire for closer union for purposes of mutual trade and profit and there is evident a strong national effort on the part of the motherland to meet their wishes. The movement coincides with that looking forward of the Imperial provinces to the participation in Imperial defence. No change of political sentiment has been more marked than that towards the kindred states of the Empire. The fatalistic indifference that was wide spread a half century ago has been replaced by an Empire-wide desire for closer union between all the States of the Empire, and some real and basic progress has been made towards that desired goal.

Inter-State Steamship lines and submarine cable services have been established. We have Imperial penny postage. Several of the self-governing dominions have enacted preferential tariffs. A share in Imperial defence has been undertaken by several states and is under consideration by others.

Inter-state conferences, such as the Imperial Press Conference, the Imperial Defence Conference of 1909, and meetings of the Chamber of Commerce and Boards of Trade of the Empire have served to educate the nation towards a wider patriotism and a closer union.

These have all helped to foster the spirit of Imperialism which underlies success in any movement for the organic unity of the Empire—a subject not only of vital interest and importance but one of wide dimensions and great complexity.

ing obligations; and this is essentially true of the component parts of the British Empire, whose interests and fortunes are so closely interwoven and inter-dependent. Co-ordinated autonomy is the ideal and the true essentials to any really forward step towards closer union are a recognition of the equal partnership of Empire and a zealous spirit of co-operation.

The problem then is how to retain individual self-government in all things peculiar to each unit and at the same time obtain united action in all things Imperial.

Although during the past twenty-five years many formal plans have been suggested for reaching a basis of mutual understanding and for strengthening the bonds of Empire, the Empire is still without an articulating agency. That progress, however, is being made is evident when we read the history of the Colonial or Imperial Conferences since that of 1897.

Though tentative, embryonic and incomplete in form, these Conferences (in themselves a recognition of the autonomy of the Overseas States) have been a means of getting something done, and of approaching a mutual understanding Imperially. While sitting, the Conference possesses an official and representative character. The discussions concern the Empire's affairs though its resolutions bind no one.

The last Imperial Conference in 1907 instituted a permanent secretariat appointed under the direction of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, charged with the duty of keeping informed the several governments in regard to matters of past or future discussion; and with the conduct of correspondence and conference details. This Im-

perial Secretariat has since been established in Downing Street, and has been linked to the Dominions Department of the Colonial Office, without being entirely merged in it. The Secretary is provided with such assistance as he requires from the staff of the Dominions Department, with which he is closely associated. While much remains to be done, this is a step forward and constitutes or can be made to constitute a real centre of mutual information and discussion in Imperial affairs.

Let us take this as a starting point for the next Conference of 1911. Let that Conference take three steps:—

First, suggest or recommend to the British Government, that the Secretary of State for the Colonies be known in future as the “Secretary of State for Imperial Affairs” or “for the Overseas Dominions” or “for Greater Britain.”

Second, recommend to each of the self-governing nation states the establishment of a distinct department in their Government, under a responsible head, the Minister of External Affairs, for the management of their general external interests, and in particular the conduct of matters of Imperial concern. The establishment of such a department in each self-governing dominion would undoubtedly assist in co-ordinating Imperial action.

Third, constitute, or arrange for the establishment of, at the Imperial Office, of a permanent advisory and consultative Committee, Commission or Council consisting of the High Commissioners, and Agents-General of the various self-governing Overseas States—“Ambassadors of Empire”—the Crown Office Agents and the Secretaries of State

There is a convenient but weak and dangerous theory that great things will come to pass by letting present things severely alone. No great cause was ever carried to success by letting things drift, and if the Empire is worth preserving, strengthening and developing as a worldforce, that object can only be attained by working for it. The position and prosperity of the Dominion of Canada long ago refuted the contentions of those who declared that it would be dangerous to unite all of the separated provinces under a common system of government, and has more than justified the foresight, and sagacity of those who addressed themselves to the difficult task of confederation. What the statesmen of Canada, Australia and South Africa have done can be done within the Empire. Unquestionably it is a more difficult task, but it is not impossible of achievement.

The problem is to harmonize the organization without doing violence to the principles by which the Empire has matured. Experience and a close analysis of the problem, however, have shown that immediate union on the lines of an elaborately constituted Imperial Parliament with the jurisdiction of the Imperial and local Parliaments carefully distinguished and defined presents difficulties too great and advantages too few to permit of the fulfilment of the great constitutional dream. That is a far-off vision of Union. What is needed now is a formula for united action based on the present state of inter-Imperial relations.

An Imperial constitution, however necessary, cannot be written in a day; it is better to "hasten slowly" in constitution making. There must be no attempt at forcing the pace. The subject is

to be approached in a cautious and tentative fashion. It has taken centuries to bring the Empire to its present state; it cannot be completed by the passage of an Act of Parliament at Westminster, creating a federated Empire. We must build on the substructure of the past and take existing institutions as our basis.

The question before us is not to draft an Imperial constitution but rather to indicate the road by which the goal of Imperial unity is most likely to be reached.

The present conception of the British Empire regards Great Britain and the self-governing Dominions of Greater Britain as constituting a group of allied Nations. If there is a difference between the ordinary relations of allied peoples and those existing between the Motherland and the kindred states it lies in the fact that there exists much greater freedom of speech and intercourse than is permissible and customary between other allies; there is a recognition of the perfect autonomy which has accompanied the growth to full nationhood of the self governing Dominions; and there is on the part of the latter a clear and far conception of their responsibilities as part of one Empire. There seems to be, in short, a virtual declaration on their part for autonomy first and combination afterwards. Nor does it appear that any other solution of the problem would be either advisable or possible.

While combination involves some sacrifice of absolute autonomy, no alliance is conceivable which does not limit to some extent the freedom of action of the allies themselves. Autonomy must imply increased responsibility rather than decreas-



The principles underlying the governance of empire must be independence in local affairs, consultation with regard to Imperial relations and unity in foreign policy.

Internal Imperial questions and the external relations of the Empire are matters which affect all, and should be by all determined.

The discussions of the Committee would of course have particular reference to such matters as are essentially Imperial in character, **eventually** including:—

(a) **IMPERIAL DEFENCE**—including Naval and Military matters, including the due representation of the Overseas States upon the Committee of Imperial Defence.

It would seem that only by a system of representative committees can the Imperial Provinces unite their ministerial action and Imperial administration. To delegate Empire-wide powers to the holder of a Cabinet position in the British Government would not be entirely acceptable to the Overseas States. Direct association and representation of Greater Britain's governments on such a committee must precede any national organization of the Empire's naval and military forces, and is essential to their intelligent co-ordination.

#### **The Formation of an Imperial General Staff.**

The interchange of Oversea naval and military units between different parts of the Empire, meaning not only frequent transfers of officers, but also of considerable bodies of men of the permanent forces:

The occasional training of overseas regiments with regiments of the British Army:

The administration of such regiments as the "King's Colonials" composed of citizens of the Oversea States resident in Great Britain, and now administered by the various Agents-General.

(b) **IMPERIAL TRADE**—including the establishment of a system of preferential tariffs bringing strength and support to the development and permanent unity of the Empire—a business basis of unity: and in this connection it may be considered desirable to establish or hold a representative Imperial Commerce Conference enabling the business men of the Empire to confer on commercial matters in which all are interested.

(c) **IMPERIAL COMMUNICATION**—The establishment of inter-Imperial mail, freight and passenger services:

The establishment of a complete inter-Imperial system of wireless telegraphy or cable service:

The reduction of cable rates, (for, "you cannot instruct the democracy of the British Empire at a shilling a word.")

The reduction of the postage rates on newspapers, circulated within the Empire.

(d) **IMPERIAL LAWS**—The unification of the laws of the Empire relating to shipping and navigation, patents and copyright, bankruptcy, corporations, naturalization and citizenship, negotiable instruments, weights and measures and coinage:

The establishment of one common Imperial Court of Appeal for both the Motherland and the Oversea States.

for Greater Britain, India, the Home Office and for Foreign Affairs, the Secretary of State for War, the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Premier of Great Britain.

This Round Table Conference or Consultative Council would be constituted without legislative powers, a means of communication, an Imperial Clearing House.

Many of its members are gentlemen of great distinction and ability; experienced statesmen trained in government in the oversea provinces; all of them selected for their knowledge of the "Outer Empire," of its great dominions and its peoples. All of its members are resident in the capital of the Empire; all are in close and constant touch with the actual life and social and political problems of their respective constituencies. Such a council could in an exceedingly short time consult the opinion of every Imperial Province. There would be no danger of any representative jeopardising the independence of his home state. It would be all inclusive, yet undisturbing. There would be no danger of any portion of the Empire being ignored or over-ridden. The Province of Prince Edward Island would be heard as well as the Commonwealth of Australia; the Falkland Islands as well as the Indian Empire. Every responsible government overseas, federal and provincial, every self governing state, Crown colony, protectorate and "sphere of influence" would have its representative and pro-consul, and as the Crown colonies and other dependencies became self-governing, they would acquire new privileges and a new status in the Council of Empire.

While purely advisory in its functions, the Committee would enable an exchange of views to take place and would be a means of arriving at a mutual inter-Imperial understanding on any matter requiring uniform or reciprocal legislation or uniform administrative action, and while possessing no legislative powers, closer union would be promoted and a step forward made.

4. The advantages of such a Council or Committee over special Imperial Conferences meeting every three or four years is evident. The difficulty arising from the great distances from the heart of the Empire of the overseas governments, which prevent individual members of the States Government from being members of the Council would be met by the appointment of the State's own representative in London, thereby providing for the more frequent conference of oversea representatives, as a means of obtaining in an exceedingly short space of time, the consensus of opinion on any important Imperial matter.

5. From the first it would be a permanent institution sitting continuously in London, day by day the year round; informing itself daily and hourly on all matters of Imperial importance at home and abroad. Catholicity and breadth of view would thus be secured to the discouragement of mere sectionalism.

Its inauguration would not cause a ripple on the waters. It would disturb nothing, least of all autonomy. It could be instituted to-day or at the next Imperial Conference, without difficulty or strain, if the requisite spirit of good will and statesmanship were manifested.

(e) **IMPERIAL MIGRATION**—The organization of an Imperial system to direct the emigration of landless men from overcrowded provinces towards the menless land of other Imperial States,—the conservation of British man power the world around—a question bound up with the questions of defence and economic and commercial development, the maintenance of British sentiment, language, nationality and ideals:

**The establishment of Imperial Labor Exchanges,** making labor an interchangeable commodity throughout the Empire:

**Joint action in such a matter as Asiatic immigration.**

We want our trade, our emigrants, our surplus capital to go to the Empire rather than to foreign countries, thereby adding to the strength and stability of the Imperial Provinces on whom will rest in future a large measure of the responsibility of maintaining the Empire's supremacy.

(f) **IMPERIAL FINANCE**—including the establishment of a bureau of adequate information and advice regarding the issue of oversea loans thereby preventing that competition between States in the money market which now costs them so dearly:

**The consideration of such matters as the consolidation of the debts of the whole Empire, and the guarantee of loans by the whole Empire:**

**The management of any Imperial debt:**

**The supervision of Royal Mints throughout the Empire, and the institution of an Empire currency system.**

(g) **FOREIGN POLICY**—The direction of the Empire's foreign policy, beginning with the control of the Empire's consular and diplomatic service:

Inter-imperial consultation and interchange of views upon treaties negotiated with other nations, the conclusion of which might be prejudicial to the Imperial cause.

(h) **INTERNAL MATTERS**—including the establishment of a system of interchange of officials between the Colonial Office and the Governments of the Imperial Provinces:

One Empire-wide standard of admission to the civil service:

Uniformity, within reasonable bounds, in examinations for the various professions throughout the Empire:

The gradual advancement of various colonial governments to an autonomous stage:

Advising in connection with the administration of the Colonial Office.:

The establishment of a system of inter-Imperial travelling scholarships, for it must be recognized that mutual knowledge within the parts of the Empire is the most powerful binding force which we can obtain, as ignorance is the most fruitful source of misunderstanding:

The establishment of offices in London and other cities of the Empire, as information bureaus.

In short, such a representative committee would by proceeding step by step, secure Imperial co-operation in Defence, Trade and Finance.

Any voting upon any question under discussion would be by states, that is, the Commonwealth

of Australia would have one vote; not one for each Agent-General and High Commissioner; similarly the Dominion of Canada, one vote, and so on; the vote of each Dominion having more than one representative being determined by the majority of the members. In this way, the greater Empire-States such as confederated South Africa, Canada and Australia would have representation somewhat proportioned to their size and importance although the equality of all would be maintained on a division. In the same way the Crown Colonies would be treated as one unit recording their vote through the Crown Agents. It would be entirely within the rights of anyone state to dissent from a proposal even if all the others accepted the compact.

As already stated, there should be the limitation of the powers and functions of the Conference to those of consultation and recommendation. The Conference would not legislate, but would consider proposals submitted to them as subjects of uniform legislation or executive action, and all decisions or agreements reached would be reduced to the form of a draft Bill ready for submission to any Legislature for ratification and adoption, or to the British Parliament for enactment. In this way though local autonomy would be unaffected, mutual understandings arrived at would have the same operation and effect as legislation.

From time to time the Imperial Council would be attended by the Premiers of Oversea States, the Ministers of Defence, Trade and Commerce and other important portfolios, and matters of great moment could be discussed, and principles of Imperial trade, defence, migration, finance and

foreign policy outlined. The Premier of each self-governing State with other prominent members of their governments might well be spared for a month each year to meet in London for the purpose of discussing matters of Imperial import. This would make the council more of a representative body and this in effect would be a continuance of the Imperial Conferences.

In the same way those citizens of the Empire acting on such bodies as the Committee of Imperial Defence could attend the discussions of the Consultative Committee, taking part in the discussion and voting with their own State representatives. Every such additional member would be an expert in some branch of Imperial affairs. The presence of additional representatives from any Imperial Province would not affect the voting power of that Province in the Conference or destroy the equality of the position of all the Empire States.

Such a course of system of government would be more truly in harmony with Imperial thought, and at the same time would be a means of guiding the growth of the Imperial Provinces and strengthening the Imperial tie; it would in effect "secure the unity of the Empire and insure the continuance of its growth while imposing no restraint on the best possible development of the constituents."

In course of time, and if experience justified it, a constitution or more definite basis would be outlined, further defining the representation and the method of selection of Agents-General and other representatives constituting the nucleus of the Imperial Conference.



Once constituted as a representative Imperial body, it would be a natural course of action for the Government of the British Isles and the Parliament at Westminster, still the "Imperial Parliament" to consult this important body whenever matters of Imperial moment were under consideration; and being representative and reflecting the sentiment of the nation States not represented in the British Parliament, the opinion and advice of the Council, though possessing only consultative powers, would undoubtedly have tremendous weight and influence. In fact the stability of the Empire would be in jeopardy if the British Parliament should after consultation with the Council, deliberately defy its carefully considered recommendation or opinion.

This system of governance of the Empire of course would not be responsible government; that is, constitutional government by elected representatives; it would be merely a means of co-operation through selected delegates of the local governments of the Empire. It would be diplomacy and negotiation, not legislation. It would, however, reflect the wishes of the Nation-States and would crystalize those wishes into legislative enactment; It would promote Imperial Unity by establishing a centre of gravity, counter-acting centrifugal tendencies, without affecting local autonomy.

As time went on there would be more precise methods of government attained, a scientific basis would be reached in which terms and phrases would correspond with some closeness to the reality. An Imperial constitution would gradually come into existence (undoubtedly after submission,

through the various governments, to the peoples of the Empire) taking the place of the loose bundle of conventions and tacit understandings which had served as stepping stones to closer union.

The step forward from this form of governance to one of greater responsibility would not come until the value and competence of the Imperial Council had been proved in practice and unless and until the kindred States would consent to delegate to their representatives in the Imperial Council the right and power to bind their constituency by their decision. This might and probably would be a gradual change, but from the moment that all States represented in the Imperial Council gave to their delegates this power, from that moment the British Parliament would cease to exercise or would forego its right to bind the Oversea States by its decrees, and Imperial legislation would be enacted "by the King and with the consent of the Imperial Council. It would be a new House of Parliament, and in its completeness the Imperial Council would have absolute and undivided control of the Navy, the Army, the Diplomatic Corps, the Consular Service, and the making of offensive and defensive alliances with other world powers and the foreign relations of the whole Empire. The unity of the Empire would be accomplished in the realization of a wider patriotism.

The ideal is perhaps a matter for the far future. It may not be possible except under a radical reorganization of existing political systems, but if we as citizens cannot look forward to the time when the British Empire may be directed by a Council or Parliament truly Imperial and representative-

ly Imperial, we can have little confidence in the permanence of the race and its supremaey.

The continuance of the Empire depends upon the establishment of a means whereby the voice of the outlying imperial provinces shall be heard at the centre, for common purposes and joint functions.

A system of Empire governance must be devised which will eventually make the self-governing States active agencies in the government of the Empire. Only by unification can the splendid heritage of the past, the great inspiration of the present, and the still greater promise of the future and the ideals of liberty, justice and personal responsibility upon which the whole fabric rests, be preserved to this and succeeding generations.

The Imperial Provinces speak plainly for a permanent unification; a truly Greater Britain, a galaxy of kindred States, all acknowledging one King-Emperor, one Flag, one Constitution, one great national destiny. The time must come and cannot longer be delayed "when the British Empire, founded upon freedom; buttressed by affectionate sentiment, fortified by mutual interest, shall stand impregnable, unassailable, four-square to all the winds that blow."

CIVIS BRITANNICUS SUM.





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